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ABSTRACT

What is known about gangs is reviewed and the information is brought up to date. The book covers reported changes in the structure and crime patterns of gangs, their age, ethnic, and gender characteristics, and their spread into almost all corners of the United States. The early chapters consider four issues that are major concerns in understanding the gang problem. The first is the issue of defining the gang. Street gangs are considered as qualitatively different from other forms of gangs. The second issue involves recent changes in gangs, presenting new data on violence and the spread of gangs. The third issue is the involvement of street gangs in drug distribution, and the fourth issue is ways of handling the gang problem. It is argued that most gang prevention and suppression programs have been either ineffectual or actually have made matters worse. Social conditions mean that gangs are here to stay for the immediate future at least, and that the problem is growing internationally. Only long-term solutions to social problems will reduce gang formation. (Contains 5 tables and 16 figures.) (SLD)

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